

MURRAY CITY MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

“What Your Tax Dollars Buy in Murray” Part Three

This is the third in a series of articles by the Murray City Council relating to how your tax dollars are utilized in Murray City. The objective of these articles is to inform citizens about municipal government and taxation. Last month's article concluded with the question: "What services do your tax dollars buy in Murray?" This article will address what services we can expect the City to provide for us as citizens and property owners.

The first two articles in the series explained that the City budget is made up of a General Fund, and Enterprise Funds. The latter are self sufficient budgets, operated as businesses, in which the customer pays for the service/commodity according to usage. These services/commodities include electricity, water, waste water, garbage pick up, etc. Rates are designed to cover the cost of providing that commodity. Unlike private business, these Enterprise funds are not designed to bring a profit to the City.

The General Fund uses taxes to provide municipal services to every resident. All residents and property owners pay for these services, no matter the usage. Can you name the services that your City provides for you? The obvious services are Public Safety (police, fire, paramedics) and Public Services (road repair, snow plowing, parks, recreation programs, etc.). Other services that Murray provides, not seen in all cities, include tree trimming along park strips and roadways, crossing guards at school crosswalks, Neighborhood Watch signs, citizen education programs in schools and neighborhoods, D.A.R.E. and G.R.E.A.T. drug/gang prevention program in schools, School Resource Officers, and many more. Murray has been recognized as a leader in providing municipal services. Award winning parks and recreation programs, reliable power, rapid police response, and innovative municipal programs have been recognized regularly by the state and nationally.

If you were to study the tax notice you receive from Salt Lake County each year, you would see how your tax dollars are divided. As mentioned in last month's article, Murray City receives only 12% of the property taxes you pay. For calendar year 2005, if your property has an assessed value of \$150,000, you pay about \$217.05 to Murray City, \$402.31 to Salt Lake County, \$979.06 to Murray School District, and the remaining 10% is divided between the Library, Mosquito Abatement and other special service districts. For the current fiscal year, real estate property taxes make up only 11.89% of the General Fund budget. This budget provides the services we have come to expect (and sometimes take for granted) in Murray.

Like anything else we buy, we pay for service - to our cars, homes, medical and personal needs. These services are not free. Unfortunately, there is a continual increase in the cost of goods and services. We in Murray City are fortunate that the cost of municipal services has remained stable for many years. The last property tax increase in Murray was 20 years ago. For how many services/commodities do you pay the same today as you did 20 years ago? As a City Council, we believe that the more informed people are about how their money is spent, the easier it is to accept the cost. Our residents rightfully demand that the services for which they pay are prompt, cost effective, and of the highest quality. In our next article, we will explore the cost of municipal services, or in other words, how the \$32 million [that makes up the General Fund] is spent.